How do we adopt multiple cultural identities? A multidimensional operationalization of the sources of culture

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ABSTRACT

Given the shortcomings of unidimensional accounts of culture that are based on nationality, this paper builds on and steps beyond current multidimensional conceptualizations of culture in order to provide first empirical evidence for a multidimensional operationalization of culture. It shows the multiple and simultaneous sources of cultural values (i.e., Family, Nationality, Urban/Rural Background, etc.) that individuals draw from in order to behave in accordance with their social setting. This contributes to our understanding of *how* and *when* individuals adopt multiple cultural identities. As the first attempt to operationalize the 'mosaic' framework of culture proposed by Chao and Moon (2005), this paper presents rich and detailed accounts from participants operating in various multinational organizations located in Munich, Germany and Cape Town/Johannesburg, South Africa. Findings reveal that the operationalization that was used in this study can determine which cultural facets are more influential than others in different settings. It further shows how some individuals willingly adopt distinct cultural identities in different social settings (i.e., home culture versus organizational culture), while others acquire permeable identities, bringing their home culture to work. Thus, we provide a multifaceted view of what constitutes culturally derived behaviour and how individuals' multiple cultural identities can be managed in the workplace.

1. Introduction

The gap between how culture is conceptualized and how it is operationalized in cross-cultural studies is widening, mainly due to the difficulties associated with the definition and measurement of such a complex, highly abstracted and multidimensional construct (Kitayama, 2002; Schaffer & Riordan, 2003; Taras, Rowney, & Steel, 2009). While culture is predominantly conceptualized as a multifaceted system that influences individuals' behaviour through espoused values derived from their interaction with their external environment (D'Andrade, 1981; Geertz, 1973; Hannerz, 1992; Schwartz, 1992), cultural distance/difference is still predominantly measured using 'national' variances (Earley, 2006; Shenkar, 2001), with associated prescriptive and predictive capabilities (Allik & Realo, 2009; Hofstede, 1991; House et al., 2004; Ollier-Malaterre, Valcour, Den Dulk, & Kossek, 2013). However, the

reality of globalization has put this latter approach into question. As Tung (2008) notes, most developed and many developing countries are culturally heterogeneous and multi-ethnic in profile, with long-established immigrant diasporas. Consequently, there is a significant discrepancy between what individuals articulate as their nation's 'cultural norms' and what they have internalized as values and behaviour (Todeva, 1999). This discrepancy between an individual's value orientation and the aggregated national-level value orientation indicates the need for a conceptualization that takes individual-level as well as national-level determinants of value orientations into account to ensure that national-level determinants of cultural behaviour are not overemphasized at the expense of other individual-level or group-level determinants (Birkinshaw, Brannen, & Tung, 2011; McSweeney, 2002; Seo & Gao, 2015; Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2012; Williamson, 2002).

The growing recognition of the interaction between these different levels has resulted in an increasing call for a *system-view* rather than an *entity-based* operationalization of culture (Kitayama, 2002). A system approach takes multiple cultural dimensions and their socializing agents into account in order to develop the notion

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that individuals can not only occupy multiple cultural spaces, but also simultaneously draw from various sources of values depending on their situation (Chao & Moon, 2005; Earley, 2006; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Swidler, 1986; Taras et al., 2009). Consider the following vignette (adapted from Dietz, Gillespie, & Chao, 2010: 3):

Nadia, an Iranian businesswoman, is negotiating with a prospective alliance partner from Germany. When she enters the room her counterpart, Peter, extends his hand for her to shake as a first gesture of goodwill. Nadia hesitates but takes his hand briefly. While Peter is impressed by her apparent cultural openness, her Iranian colleagues are shocked, seeing as it is neither customary nor appropriate for Iranian women to touch unfamiliar men. But Nadia has studied in the United States, and worked with European firms throughout her career. She has learned to switch among styles of working when necessary.

Individuals in such encounters reveal how a dichotomy between, for example, 'German culture' and 'Iranian culture' can be oversimplified, inaccurate and even potentially discordant, given that it becomes difficult to determine *which* cultural values are being used in this context: national, educational, professional or organizational?

Building on these arguments, the paper's contribution to the cross-cultural management literature is twofold. First, in contrast to the prevailing studies in this area, it adopts a multidimensional conceptualization *and* operationalization of culture by taking individual, group and national-level determinants of cultural values into account. Second, in doing so, it provides the first empirical illustration of how multiple cultural dimensions result in situation-induced behaviour, and how interactions between multiple sources of values can enable individuals to adopt and manage 'flexible' identities. We mobilize the 'Mosaic' framework proposed by Chao and Moon (2005), as a dynamic, comprehensive and methodologically flexible framework to reveal how individuals perceive their own cultural identity and how they draw from multiple cultural facets in a given social setting. The findings advance theoretical debates regarding the manifestation of a multifaceted operationalization of culture by empirically demonstrating how individuals draw on different, simultaneous cultural facets (tiles) in order to behave in accordance with their social setting. In addition, we show that the tiles within the 'Mosaic' framework that are activated vary according to the context in which individuals function. Finally, our study suggests that organizations could better manage cultural diversity within a workforce by seeking to activate those tiles that cohere closely with key organizational values.

2. Conceptualizing culture

2.1. Classic and contemporary concepts of culture

There have been various approaches in defining and conceptualizing culture in the literature on the basis of epistemological viewpoints (i.e. culture as an etic or emic construct, as a dependent or independent variable), causing fragmented, polarized and contended understandings of culture (Martin, 2002; Sackmann, 1991; Smircich, 1983). Culture was originally defined by Tylor (1871) as "*that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society*" (p. 1). Subsequent definitions referred to culture as an instrument utilized by individuals in order to give meaning to the world around them and was determined by their history, and transmitted from one generation to the next (Malinowski, 1944; Parsons, 1951).

Later authors such as White (1949), Geertz (1973), and Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) proposed that culture should be viewed as a science — consisting of various laws — that determines behaviour and as "*an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life*" (Geertz, 1973: 89).

More contemporary definitions, however, stipulate that culture is a tool for problem solving in such a way that it enables individuals to make sense of the behaviour of others, therefore introducing the process of 'sense-making' and 'interpreting' to what the construct of culture entails (D'Andrade, 1981, Hannerz, 1992; Trompenaars, 1993). Culture then, is simultaneously manifested and interpreted in a given social context, and in relation to other individuals.

These various theorizations of culture reveal that culture's multidimensionality derives, in part, from being simultaneously made up of various elements (i.e., its basic assumptions, values, beliefs and meanings), the dynamic interaction of these elements with each other (culture as a problem-solving tool, transmitted system), and the context in which they occur (see Hatch, 1993). The challenge is to identify the initial conditions (sources of values) and the emergent conditions (situation) of a manifested cultural behaviour.

In recent attempts to address this challenge, various scholars have stipulated that culture's complexity fosters the multiplicity of cultural identities (Holliday, 2010; Leung, Bhagat, Buchan, Erez, & Gibson, 2011; Sackmann & Phillips, 2004; Taras et al., 2009; Tung, 2008). For example, Roccas and Brewer (2002) introduced the concept of social identity complexity, which discusses how the individual's subjective representation of the inter-relationships among his or her multiple group identities can result in a complex and multifaceted cultural identity.

In line with these conceptualizations, several scholars have sought to present culture as a construct composed of multiple facets (Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell, 2012; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Gibson & McDaniel, 2010). Emphasizing this, Schneider and Barsoux (2003) propose that individuals are influenced by the different 'cultural spheres' they encounter and inhabit at work, including nationality, profession, industry, company, even function, with each sphere having its own set of artefacts, values and assumptions. Individuals' observed behaviour is therefore derived from the interaction among these 'spheres'.

2.2. Culture as a multidimensional construct: moving beyond national culture

Given the multiple cultural dimensions theory, the weaknesses in the conventional research approach, *pace* Hofstede and Trompenaars, of predominantly conceptualizing culture at the national level, become self-evident (see Tsui, Nifadkar, & Amy, 2007). Indeed, associating an individual's culture with their nationality, and seeking to predict their behaviour based on presumed shared values and similarities in thinking at the national level, has few supporters (Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2011). This is because individuals can acquire multiple self-conceptions (e.g. nationality, organization, religion, etc.), and draw from their full set of cultural memberships in order to display specific behaviour appropriate to the relevant obligations of the situation, with the potential for conflicting features (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). As Hong, Wan, No, and Chi state: "*When individuals become experts in more than one culture, their social information processing is channelled through the lenses of more than one culture, and their interpretive biases could be pushed in the direction of one or the other culture by the presence of cultural cues*"

in the immediate environment" (2007: 325). Thus, we need a conceptualization *and* operationalization of culture that reflects this multiplicity and aims to predict *which* 'culture' is most likely to influence behaviour and in which situation.

However, few of the numerous multidimensional conceptual frameworks presented have been operationalized and empirically examined (Leung et al., 2011). Tsui et al. (2007: 461) posit that two out of three studies still tend to use nation as a proxy for culture given that "culture as it is currently used in the literature assumes a shared property of a nation and national culture is used as an explanatory variable". Therefore, given the multiple cultural identities thesis, the question should be: Which cultural identity(ies) should be expected to exert most influence on behaviour and when?

2.3. The cultural mosaic framework

Chao and Moon's (2005) 'mosaic' framework draws from complexity theory and social identity theory and thus addresses both the 'system' view of culture and the 'meanings' attached to values (Geertz, 1973; Triandis, 2002). Adopting a fragmented approach to the study of culture (Martin, 2002), it allows for the disentanglement of the multi-dimensionality of the construct, revealing the etic and emic determinants of culture in a given context. A 'mosaic' refers to a composite picture that is made up of distinct facets-in Chao and Moon's terminology, 'tiles', where both the overall picture and the multitude of tiles are distinguishable (Chao & Moon, 2005). Accordingly, an individual's *overall* cultural profile ('mosaic') can be viewed as a composite of several group memberships (tiles). In contrast to other multidimensional conceptualizations which were reviewed in the previous section, the cultural mosaic takes a 'bottom-up' orientation toward culture, privileging the individual as the level and unit of analysis over and above, but as well as, the group. In so doing, it provides a taxonomy that extends beyond the traditional, higher-level representation of culture (i.e., nationality) to incorporate how multiple cultural memberships exist and are enacted. It accommodates the simultaneous recognition of individuals' 'global' cultural identities with the presence of smaller, more 'localized' cultural influences.

The tiles that make up an individual's cultural mosaic are categorized under Demographic, Geographic and Associative cultural tiles. Demographic tiles comprise physical and innate attributes such as age, gender, race and ethnicity. Geographic tiles refer to features of the region(s) in which the individual belongs, such as nationality, but also meteorological climate, urban/rural and coastal/inland location. Unlike demographic tiles (i.e., gender, ethnicity), one's geographic tiles can change easily: an individual can live in and adopt or resist the culture of different locations (see Caprar, 2011).

Associative tiles relate to those formal and informal groups that an individual associates with, generally by choice. These tiles reflect the motivational aspect of culture and the need for an individual to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and to be affiliated with a group (Tajfel, 1982; Yuki, Maddux, Brewer, & Takemura, 2005). Associative tiles consist of groups such as Family, Religion, Profession, Employer, Hobbies and Political Affiliation (See Appendix 1 for fuller descriptions of each).

The research question motivating this study is how a multidimensional conceptualization of culture, and multiple, simultaneous cultural identities can be *operationalized* using the 'Mosaic' framework for culture. In order to address the question of which cultural identity exerts most influence and when, we explore which, if any, of the cultural tiles proposed are perceived as influential on individuals' cultural identity, with the aim to provide more nuanced and compelling accounts of how the multiple cultural facets influence individuals' behaviour in a given social setting.

3. Method

3.1. Research setting

Data was collected based on a convenience sample of individuals across five different multi-national companies who were willing to participate in the research. Three companies are headquartered in Munich, Germany. Company 'A' is an international financial services provider, with 60 different nationalities working at its headquarters. Company B is a global tourism company with subsidiaries in Australia, South Africa and Switzerland, and 30 different nationalities represented in its workforce. Company C is a large reinsurance firm with more than 45,000 employees operating worldwide. Two companies are based in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa: Company D is a leading tobacco company operating in 58 countries which entered the South African market through multiple acquisitions, while Company E is a large UK banking group operating in 30 different countries.

Access was initially established through the first author's personal contacts (as with Caprar, 2011). The company's relevant gatekeeper contacted employees to seek their participation in the research. Those who were willing to participate contacted the interviewer for further information. Although a convenience sample, this purposive method, which was driven by our intention to generalize to theory, enabled the recruitment of individuals who varied across a range of cultural tiles, and overcame the limitation of using any one cultural facet (i.e., nationality, organization) as a proxy for culture (see Table 1 for summary profiles and Table 2 for the complete sample).

3.2. Operationalizing the 'mosaic' framework

In Chao and Moon's metatheory, the 'mosaic tiles' can influence individual behaviour by either a) one cultural tile dominating the others, such as a dominant corporate culture in a multi-national company, b) different cultural tiles merging in harmony and strengthening an individual's value-set by activating and reinforcing similar values, or c) different cultures remaining separate and independent, giving rise to differentiated or even conflicting value-sets, resulting in unpredictable individual behaviour, perhaps subject to which 'culture' is prioritized and enacted according to the circumstances.

The methodological challenge of operationalizing the 'Mosaic' framework with its aforementioned properties, for the first time, stems from the need to collect comprehensive accounts that accurately capture individuals' reflective perceptions of their overall cultural mosaic, whilst incorporating a sense of influence and interconnectedness among the different cultural tiles cited, on their behaviour. Although self-reported accounts have been criticized for their inaccuracy in providing correlations between variables (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), they are appropriate for soliciting rich insights into people's interpretation of their own social world, to generate a holistic representation of the world as it is experienced (Siebert & Costley, 2013). When viewing culture through the lens of constructivism (Hatch, 1993), it can be argued that individuals — as culture bearers — are able to reflect upon and narrate their experience and perception of what constitutes 'their' cultural identity, provided they are rightly guided to do so (see Benet-Martinez, 2006; Caprar, 2011).

Table 1
Data collection summary.

		Germany		South Africa		UK		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Job Status	Non-managerial	3	2	0	0	0	0	3	2
	Middle manager	8	5	8	1	1	6	17	7
	High-level manager	4	4	1	0	0	1	5	5
Highest level of Education attained	High School	2	0	2	0	0	0	4	0
	Bachelors	3	1	2	1	0	6	5	2
	Postgraduate/Doctorate	8	8	2	0	1	1	11	9
	Professional Degree	2	2	3	0	0	0	5	2
Age range		**Years**				**Count**			
		26–30				2			
		31–35				11			
		36–40				16			
		41–45				4			
		46–50				3			
		56–60				1			
		Total				37			
Number of country(ies) participants resided in.		1 country				23%			
		Between 2 and 3 countries				61%			
		More than 3 countries				16%			

Table 2
Participants' profile summary.

Participant	Employer company	Age	Level of education	Nationality	Profession
Allen	C	31–35	High School	German	IT-Support
Albert	B	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	International Coordinator
Bheki	D	31–35	Professional Degree	South African- Black	Procurement Manager
Birgit	B	36–40	Professional Degree	German	Commercial Clerk
Chris	C	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	Freelance
Claire	B	26–30	Professional Degree	German	Personal Assistant
Claudio	C	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German- Italian	Head Of Division
Dan	D	31–35	Postgrad-Doc	British	Associate Director
Edwin	B	31–35	High School	Turkish, Swiss	Office Manager
Edward	D	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	British	Manager Of Business development And Planning
Ela	A	36–40	Bachelor	Turkish	Assistant V.P Executive Consultant
Franz	B	36–40	Bachelor	German	Head Of IT
Frederick	A	36–40	Diploma Kaufmann	German	Project Manager
Gale	A	31–35	Bachelor	American	Business Development Manager
George	A	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	Senior Project Manager
Gregor	C	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	Patent Attorney
Hammond	D	31–35	Professional Degree	South African (Coloured)	Trade Development Manager
Helen	A	26–30	Postgrad-Doc	German	Staff Operation Qualification Management
Henry	B	56–60	High School	German	Group Director HR
Jakob	D	31–35	High School	South Africa (White)	Regional Sales Manager
Jan	C	46–50	Professional Degree	German	Plant Protection Officer For SA
Joseph	C	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	Software Developer
Nicole	A	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	Senior IT Programmer
Pearl	D	31–35	Bachelor	South African (Coloured)	Senior Finance Analyst
Ruth	A	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	Senior Market Strategy
Simon	B	41–45	Bachelor	Iranian	IT Helpdesk
Sabrina	A	46–50	Postgrad-Doc	German	Senior Finance Analyst
Siegfried	B	36–40	Professional Degree	German- Romanian	IT Helpdesk
Steve	D	46–50	High School	Zimbabwean	Procurement Manager
Thabo	D	31–35	Bachelor	South African (Black)	Property Underwriter Manager
Valerie	C	31–35	Postgrad-Doc	French- German	Controller For Subsidiary
Vicki	A	36–40	Postgrad-Doc	German	Head Of Portfolio Management

3.3. Research design and data collection

A mixed-method, embedded design approach best addressed the overarching exploratory objectives of the research (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Data were collected in two phases: a short survey 2–3 months prior to a follow-up voluntary interview. The surveys extracted *which* cultural tiles most shaped: a) participants' cultural identity and b) workplace identity; the interviews dealt with the *how* and *why* of these accounts. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were carried out in English considering that all participants were proficient in the English language (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The survey, based on Chao and Moon's model, consisted of a series of questions regarding the participants' demographics, including their age range, nationality(ies), profession, number of countries they had resided in, education and hobbies. Then, a 'matrix', utilized to depict relationships between entities, was designed and piloted for this study, consisting of all 11 tiles (see the example in Table 3). The matrix enabled the personalized ranking of each tile, where 1 = lowest impact and 11 = highest impact. For example, if a participant regarded their Family as the

Table 3
A sample cultural mosaic matrix for an individual.

	Family	Age	Ethnicity	Nationality	Religion	Profession	Hobbies/ Interests	Political affiliation	Organization/ Workplace	Urban/Rural background	Coastal/Inland background
1) Your cultural identity	11	2	3	7	9	4	6	1	5	6	2
2) Work behaviour	5	4	3	7	9	11	2	1	10	2	2

KEY: 1 = lowest-ranked impact; 11 = highest-ranked impact.

most influential tile of their cultural identity, they would rank it highest.

Guidance regarding what the researchers meant by 'cultural mosaic' was included with the procedure for completing the survey (see Appendix 2). The survey and matrix design enabled the participants' self-perceived 'cultural mosaic' to be accessed and articulated, addressing our need to examine an operationalization of the cultural mosaic construct.

The subsequent face-to face interviews were undertaken in order to provide more detail to the understanding of how each participant perceived their 'cultural mosaic' (King, 2004). A semi-structured interview protocol, drawing on Chao and Moon's framework, asked three main questions, designed to collect their reflections on:

- The survey itself, to record any issues or misunderstandings they may have had, in order to clarify and validate their responses.
- The participant's self-declared cultural profile, to explain why they had ranked certain tiles as most influential on their cultural profile.
- How the participant felt their ranked tiles — either in isolation or in conjunction — influenced their cultural behaviour at work.

Thus, the interviews complemented the survey results by allowing participants to reflect upon their ranked answers to the survey, and providing an opportunity to (self-) validate or challenge and even nullify their initial perceptions (Doz, 2011; Patton, 1990; Silverman, 2006).

3.4. Data analysis

Two types of data analysis using NVivo were conducted where each participant (case) constituted the unit of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the first stage, within-case analysis examined *each* participant in isolation, in order to reveal the idiosyncratic determinants of their cultural identity (i.e., an *emic* focus). Content analysis of the interview transcripts explored how the participants accounted for the ranked influence of the 11 tiles, and whether these influences were independent or intertwined with others. This 'key coded content' was then categorized and stored for further analysis. For the second phase, the cross-case analysis, we compared and contrasted responses, especially the key coded content, across the sample to identify themes, similarities or differences between cases (i.e., an *etic* focus on common determinants of culture and similar cultural mosaic patterns) (Silverman, 2006).

A coding template, based on the mosaic framework, associated 'a priori' codes with interview questions (King, 2004). For example, where participants were asked: "you have ranked X, Y and Z the highest ranked tiles for your cultural identity ... why do you think that is?" their response was coded as 'Dominant tile(s) on cultural identity'. This first-order code was then sub-divided into the tiles themselves (i.e., X, Y, Z) to produce second-order codes. Subsequently, the tiles' influence on behaviour, whether alone or in

conjunction with other tiles, was investigated. Inter-coder reliability was tested by two colleagues with a random sample of 20% of the data in order to ensure the accuracy and validity of the coding process (Richards, 2005). Differences in interpretations were discussed among the authors. Saturation — which in our cases meant recurring ranking patterns — was established upon completion of data analysis with a total number of 34 participants, which signalled that no further data needed to be collected.

The following section will discuss the findings derived from the within-case and cross-case analysis of the narratives provided by participants. Within-case analysis revealed participants' activation of the multiple cultural tiles, whereas the cross-case analysis provided evidence for participants' willingness to adopt distinct cultural identities (home vs. workplace).

4. Results

4.1. The mosaic presentation of culture: activation of multiple cultural tiles

In this section, we discuss the most frequently ranked cultural tiles (i.e., sources of cultural values), meaning the tile(s) that participants regarded as most influential on their cultural identity and work behaviour. While some tiles were considered by the participants as relevant to their cultural identity and behaviour in the workplace (i.e., Family), others were deemed as irrelevant given the situational context (i.e., Political Affiliation). Table 4 provides an overview of the rankings of each tile.

The results reveal that, for our participants, values derived from their Family are the strongest contributors in their self-declared cultural profile (see Table 3 as an example). Given that the participants were offered a wide range of eleven options and 'primed' with a clear definition of what is meant by 'culture' prior to the ranking exercise, this is a striking finding, since Family is not normally considered a *cultural* influence on behaviour. Just as surprising is that the most obvious candidate, Nationality, was ranked highest by less than half the sample. Ethnicity, the other standard identifier in culture research barely features.

This finding prompts the question: How is Family an element of culture from the point of view of our participants? A family is a definable group, with membership determined by the possession of certain characteristics. Family shapes behavioural norms through socializing members with mental frames and meanings as to what is right and wrong, and ways of understanding the group's external environment, how to interact with others, and how events are best interpreted. Finally, family is most people's first point of reference, and the first bounded group that individuals encounter and associate with. Thus family, as a source of cultural values, meets the definitional requirements of culture, and consequently can be considered a sub-system of an individual's cultural identity. The following two quotations illustrate how Family was considered by the participants as the main source from which their cultural values derive (all names are pseudonyms; key coded content is italicized in the quotes):

Table 4
Dominant mosaic tiles influencing behaviour.

Tiles	No. of participants ranked as dominant tile on 'cultural identity'	No. of participants ranked as dominant tile on their work-behaviour
Family	26	9
Organization	3	24
Profession	2	22
Age (experience)	4	10
Nationality	16	3
Urban/Rural	16	2
Hobbies	3	1
Ethnicity	4	3
Religion	2	1
Coastal/Inland	0	0
Political Affiliation	1	0

"*You grow up in your family*, you see what your dad does, what your mom does, how they do it, how their surroundings do it and basically *that's what I think tells you how your cultural identity will be.*" (Albert)

"Basically the environment you grow up in, so *the first conscious reflection of what is right or wrong is determined by your family* and the family basically *predicts* this set of environments." (Ruth)

Importantly, for conceptualizing culture, there seems to be, in the primacy and priority assigned to Family, a taken-for-grantedness that this group supersedes and influences all other aspects of one's life (i.e., career, employer, nation). Note that the majority of participants were under the impression that this ranking would be exclusive to them; they were not aware of how important family values might be to others. This suggests that people may share this 'tile' without realizing — although families may have different value-sets, of course (a point we return to in the Discussion).

Nationality was the second most frequently ranked dominant tile influencing participants' cultural identity (16 out of 34). Interestingly, the majority of these cases were living outside their country of birth. Moreover, the content analysis revealed that, in the clear majority of these cases (15 out of 16), Nationality's influence on individuals' cultural identity was dependent on its alignment with other highly ranked tiles. When Family induced the same values in the participant as their fellow nationals, participants were more likely to rank Nationality highly. Siegfried is the only case where Nationality alone was ranked as a dominant tile:

"I think in my life it's a bit different, because I was born in Romania and I emigrated to Germany when I was 1½ years old. We were a small group of Germans in Romania. It was the Siebenbürgen Saxony. Then *our nationality as Germans was very important*. That's why I think for me nationality has a high impact on my cultural identity." (Siegfried)

As the *only* case for whom Nationality was considered fully synonymous with cultural identity, it can be inferred that using this as a proxy for culture can impose various limitations — especially as, even in Siegfried's case, Nationality is used as a term to refer to his family history and sense of 'otherness', rather than as a determinant of values or behaviour. Moreover, note how Siegfried has adopted a 'German' nationality and not the nationality of the country where he was born. For many individuals who are born in one country and grow up in other countries,

Nationality is dependent on how it is adopted and what nation it is referring to. The notions of national culture amongst our participants are more malleable than theories that treat culture and nationality as equivalents assume. Additionally, while Siegfried ranked Nationality as a dominant tile on his cultural identity, he did not rank it as an influential tile on his work behaviour, and made no reference to this in the interview; in Chao and Moon's terms, Nationality as a tile remained 'independent' except within this context. Others did rank Nationality highest for their cultural identity, alongside other tiles. Through a corporate acquisition, Dave describes the association between his Nationality and his culture as follows:

"*So I would say my cultural identity is nationality*, it's strong because even if I'm an expat for five years *I'm firstly Swiss and I fully know the clichés around Switzerland*, it doesn't mean that I fit all of them but that's who I am, *and I would say that's why I ranked family and nationality*, because *I come from a very, very strong family* and we have strong family values." (Dave)

Gregor is a patent attorney, born and raised in Germany. He ranked Nationality, alongside several other tiles (Organization, Profession, Urban/Rural), as having a strong influence on his cultural identity:

"*Nationality for me is related to the stuff we learn in school*, and related to our surrounding and history, *so nationality at least indirectly influences identity* so that's why. I have or would have severe problems identifying a typical German though. *I couldn't give details on a typical German, on a prototype.* Actually, well, I'm pretty identified with 'German', *being very aware of where I live, where my social contacts live, where my history is and what the society is … It's more an awareness though than, say, influencing my deeds.*" (Gregor)

Gregor's statement provides a clear distinction between associating with a nationality as a cultural identity, which he does to a degree, and seeing national culture as a predictor of his behaviour, which he does not. Similar to Dave, Gregor feels the tension between identifying with 'being German' but being unable to describe what a 'typical German' might be. A third case is Stine. She has worked and lived in different countries and currently resides in Munich. Her national culture influences her identity in the following way:

"When I say that I'm Danish I'm thinking about a picture of the landscape and my *family. I usually say I'm Danish, very Danish*

even. But also *when you live in a foreign country you're forced to emphasise your Danishness* because when you live in a foreign country like I've done for so long you put a lot of energy putting a Danish coffee thing on the table, a Danish flag on the table when it's a birthday, because *it's who I am* and I don't have it, it's far away so *I'm more Danish than I was 15 years ago in that respect.*" (Stine)

For Stine, living and working abroad has resulted in an over-emphasis of national cultural identity, although note how this goes hand in hand with Family values and upbringing, reinforcing national identity. All three cases suggest that many expatriates, and even locals, perceived their identity as being in line with the symbols, artefacts, and norms of their fellow nationals in their home country, but nevertheless felt they do not fit the 'stereotypical national'.

Nationality appears to be used as a metric by which the perceived differences between an individual and their foreign surrounding can be measured. Nationality then, when ranked in conjunction with other tiles, can be considered as a dependent tile which comes into play under nationally diverse social settings. Under these conditions, from an observer's perspective, associating an observed behaviour displayed by Dave or Stine with their National tile is rather inaccurate given that only those that are reinforced by their Family tile seem to come into play.

Alongside Family and Nationality, the Urban/Rural tile, which refers to the urban or rural environment that the participants came from, was regarded as the third most influential tile on participants' cultural identity. Again, this is a surprising finding for culture research, as this background characteristic is rarely cited as a strong cultural determinant, although it does account for within-national variance of culture. The 15 participants whose cultural profile was influenced by this tile displayed an appreciation and a high level of awareness for their direct, local external environment, and its influence on their flexible cultural identity. Ela, who has worked and lived in four different countries, describes the influence of her local childhood environment thus:

"I believe most of it [influence] comes through *your first six years* where actually you are trained by your parents, at home. And part of it is *also where you grew up* and *how you grew up,* and that's why it's *the background you're coming from.* So *what you grew up seeing* becomes identifiable as your cultural identity and, *depending on how open it is, then as you move on in life, if you live in different countries, you adapt or not.*" (Ela)

George, in contrast to Ela, has always lived in Germany. In addition to his family, he considered his Urban/Rural background as strongly influencing his cultural identity:

"I'm from Frankfurt and *Frankfurt is a very international place in Germany.* I think this has influenced my… I went to a German school with French bilingual affiliations, I did French and German so *I grew up already with people from different nationalities* and I met people from different countries in the city very often and *if I had grown up in a rural area, upper Bavaria for example, it would have been completely different.* This plays *a big role* and *I feel also at home in other big cities."* (George)

George and Ela, while coming from different countries, share similar cultural experiences and profiles from growing up in a diverse social setting. The influence of this shared 'mosaic tile' has resulted in a similar outlook (being open, adaptable) and behaviours in their current environment, perhaps even enabling them to be more flexible when interacting with colleagues from different national cultures. Where Ela's case exemplifies how growing up in a multicultural environment can increase your cultural awareness and facilitate later adaptation and result in a cultural identity that is open to the culturally different other, George's case, confirming this, demonstrates how the prevalence of 'Urban/Rural' tile (city of Frankfurt and School) over 'Family' tile resulted in his multinational cultural identity. For George, his cultural identity is strongly influenced by his Urban/Rural tile in conjunction with Organization, and considering that George is working in a multinational organization (culturally diverse social setting), he has become increasingly aware of the role his multiple tiles (Urban/Rural background, Organization) play in enabling him to operate in his current organizational context.

The following cases, supporting Chao and Moon's (2005) proposition, illustrate how multiple activated tiles, as sources of value sets, can either work in harmony, thus espousing similar values and a conformed identity in order to result in behaviour that is in accordance with the social setting (workplace), or alternatively give way to incompatible, discordant value sets that result in the individuals' adoption of distinct cultural identities, thus situationally determined.

Ruth's case exemplifies the aligned interplay of multiple activated cultural tiles; specifically, how her Family, Organization and Profession tiles all influence her behaviour in the workplace:

"Well that goes back, as you see Family is still high [in her ranking] *because that's where I picked up my initial values and rules.* Like you always have to do it right and you have to be a trustworthy person. Then when it comes to work behaviour, it's a give and take, and *that very much depends on the environment you work in.* So this is why family is still high [ranking] but I guess this is why profession and workplace is also high. I figured they are very much related. *I picked an organization which actually was a natural fit* because you select the organization and the organization selects you." (Ruth)

Gale is an expatriate in Germany, her Family and Organization tiles are both active and conflicting, resulting in some tension in her work behaviour:

"Even though I'm in a work environment, I still think that *the way that I was raised has a huge impact* on how I interact with people at the office. I think, *even if I'm at work, there are still values that I have as a young child that I carry into the workplace.* There are ways of interacting with people that I carry through and *can't change.* The second one is the organization, so *first it comes from my family and then from the organization* and how it's structured and who the people are that I'm working with, how the hierarchies are set up. For example, maybe in family it's easy to be more personal and open. But in this organization it's a bit more structured, and you have to talk to certain people before you talk to other people so *that's definitely a change that I've had to make.*" (Gale)

Gale's statement illustrates how deeply held family values can be carried through to adulthood and into work, but also how values and norms derived from family and from organization separately influence her in the workplace. If family values are incongruent with organizational values, it can result in conflicting behaviour, or require a certain degree of adaptation, as mentioned by Gale. Her case also illustrates, again, how nationality alone is not necessarily a strong cultural determinant, since she makes no reference to her 'American' culture. Thus, the assumption that nationality is equivalent to culture, particularly in the workplace, results in the

exclusion of actual predictors of behaviour such as underlying familial values, and undermines the role of organizational culture and the members' ability and willingness to adopt the values espoused by their profession and organization.

Vicki is a senior manager in her company in Munich. Originally from Bonn, which she considers to be a more 'open-minded' city than Munich, she ranked her Family, Age (experience), Religion and Profession as dominant tiles. Here she discusses the contradiction between the values of her Profession and her Family in conjunction with her Religion:

"It's a combination of family influence and religion, and so there has always been *a quite important link between the way my ancestors lived and worked and what kind of, not strictly religious, but humanistic values they were living up to. So responsibility is one of the key elements of their work ethic and so that also has been transmitted to me, which makes it sometimes difficult to work in corporations like this*, because *they have different values that are more important to them*. There were times when I regretted some of the things I did as a leader here because *it's not something that is accepted in this* [Organization] *culture.*" (Vicki)

Evidence from the cases involving misaligned tiles suggests that behaviour informed by conflicting values can be unpredictable and uncomfortable, and can often be perceived as inappropriate in one culture, but not in another. Vicki, despite being a German national working for a German corporation — which might have prompted the expectation that she would naturally 'fit' with her organizational culture — does not seem to do so due to her dominant and conflicting Family and Religion tiles.

The following section discusses how participants, like Vicki, were able to manage their multiple conflicting and divergent cultural tiles by adopting distinct cultural identities (home vs. workplace).

4.2. Switching cultural identities: adopting 'home' versus 'workplace' culture

Adopting the 'Mosaic' framework allowed for the unraveling of how individuals navigate through their multiple sources of cultural values (i.e., Family, Organization, Urban/Rural background) based on their situational cues. This approach revealed that the influence of multiple tiles on work behaviour and their alignment or conflict, was a result of *if* and *how* the individuals drew from those multiple tiles (Chao & Moon, 2005; Swidler, 1986), which elucidates the motivational aspect of conforming or conflicting cultural identities (Molinsky, 2007). Overall, 19 out of 34 participants felt that their work behaviour *was* influenced by their self-declared cultural profile — denoted by their ranking similar tiles for items 1 and 2 of their matrix (see Table 3) — while the remaining 15 ranked different dominant tiles for their cultural profile as independent to those influencing their work. That almost half of the sample could clearly 'compartmentalize' their activation of tiles, to distinguish between their cultural profile and their work behaviour suggests that individuals do not necessarily bring their (self-reported) cultural profile with them into work, and if they do, many are able and willing to adopt different cultural identities and display different behaviours, as appropriate to the social setting. The following accounts illustrate how individuals adopt distinct cultural identities.

Edward sees himself as an outsider in South Africa, and his role requires him to maintain the operating standards of his multinational employer whilst accommodating local working styles. This behavioural adaptation to situational factors has been described by Molinsky as 'code switching', defined as "purposefully modifying one's behaviour in an interaction in a foreign setting in order to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviour" (2007: 624). For Edward, his code-switching is an 'act':

"*In my case, my working self is not me.* It's the way I see it. *'Me' is me at home or me with my close friends,* so you could make the analogy that *your working self is a certain characteristic that you have to exaggerate or you're keeping some of yourself back…*" (Edward)

Stine, similarly, states:

"It [the separation] comes from *not being or feeling at home here where I am*, because it's *like an isolated cloud, my working culture and my identity* I have when I'm at work, I'm not in Germany, I'm not in Denmark, *I'm in the corporate culture* I would say." (Stine)

Valerie's first exposure to the corporate world was when she moved from France (her home country) to Germany. She perceives her work behaviour to be more in accordance with the 'German way of working', although this reference relates to her employer organization being typically German as much as to German national culture. She describes her 'code-switching' thus:

"*I began my work life in Germany, but my culture, my values, come from my family. Germany is also a part of my culture but more on the professional side*. I worked for a very, very German company which was very traditional. Then *I got really in touch with the German culture. I noticed after some negotiations actually, just the way of thinking is different.*" (Valerie)

Note how Valerie makes a distinction between her 'French Family culture' and her 'Professional German culture', indicating a clear distinction between her *home/personal* versus her *work* identity. The *salience* of Profession and Organization seemed to determine her conduct. All three cases (Edward, Stine, Valerie) further depict individuals' conscious *selection of values* in line with their social setting (i.e., workplace). This phenomenon can similarly occur when the individual is operating in their home country. Gregor, who is German and operating in Munich, explained:

"It would be *unprofessional* from me if I *allowed my* [national] *culture to influence my work* behaviour, they are *separate things.*" (Gregor)

Gregor, Stine, Edward and Valerie have acquired certain values that they share with their family and fellow nationals, but have other values which they choose to share with their colleagues.

5. Discussion

This study set out to empirically examine how a multidimensional conceptualization of culture can be operationalized, adopting the previously proposed, yet unexplored 'mosaic' framework of culture (Chao & Moon, 2005). The study revealed how, as a result of the *multiple* and *simultaneous* activation of cultural tiles, individuals willingly adopt distinct cultural identities when operating in different situational settings (home vs. workplace). Thus, we show how certain cultural tiles can overshadow others as individuals utilise their salient cultural tools depending on the contextual cues (Swidler, 1986). The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed as follows.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study addresses the call for a more comprehensive and dynamic representation of the multiple dimensions of culture, and more specifically, those dimensions that are deemed to be more influential upon employees' behaviour (Gould & Grein, 2009; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2005; Taras, 2008). The study validates, to an extent, the notion that an individual's 'culture' is perceived as being composed of multiple facets, with some tiles (i.e., Family and Organization) proving to be more influential on behaviour than others (i.e., Nationality and Religion). As the first attempt to operationalize a multidimensional conceptualization of culture, the results further demonstrate that individuals can acquire distinct cultural identities, and successfully navigate within them in order to behave in accordance with the norms of their particular social setting.

The simultaneous activation of multiple cultural tiles reveals the complexity of culture as a social system (Hannerz, 1992; Kitayama, 2002), while the presence of dominant, co-existing and compartmentalized combinations of tiles reveals culture's dependence on certain initial and emergent conditions. This corresponds to what Swidler (1986) refers to as a 'cultural tool-kit', where individuals draw from different 'configurations of tools' to respond to the problems of external adaptation and internal integration (Schein, 1984). The findings can assist cultural researchers in understanding how culture, as a multifaceted system, can become predictive of behaviour in a given social setting (Schwartz, 1992). Though, not all of these tiles will be relevant, let alone activated, for an individual, multiple dominant cultural tiles that are in concordance with each other (e.g. 'Ruth') result in consistent behaviour whereas multiple dominant yet discordant tiles (e.g. 'Gale') can result in conflicting identities which can lead to inconsistent behaviour. In line with Shenkar (2001), our findings also give rise to the notion that individuals can encounter 'cultural distance', but not necessarily because of national differences (i.e., 'Vicki'). Instead, situational factors can trigger the activation of tiles that are most relevant and influential according to the individual, thus enabling them to behave according to situational cues when values are aligned or alternatively discordant when values conflict. These findings respond to Earley's (2006) call to develop theories that link culture to action to understand how individuals select cultural content and adapt to their environment, how they perceive their social environments, and how these environments influence their value processes. Many individuals are able and willing to 'code-switch' depending on external cues (Molinsky, 2007), and manage their multiple identities. This is in line with what Brown (2014) refers to as an often employed, but rarely explored, concept of 'identity work'. Identification with a shared work identity among culturally diverse organizational members reveals how, despite differences across national, ethnic, gender, and age facets of culture, individuals can develop a shared organizational cultural identity and adhere to organizational values and practices. However, our findings reveal that this is strongly influenced by individuals' activation of their 'Organization' tile which is an indication of their motivation to adopt the organizational values and practices and has been shown to vary on an individual level (Ang & Dyne, 2008).

Lastly, if there is a dichotomy between individuals' cultural identity at work versus outside of work, researchers should be wary of using work-based surveys such as Hofstede's to determine cultural influence on behaviour. These findings further contribute to Kitayama's (2002) call for a more systemic and holistic operationalization of culture in cross-cultural research that also includes additional dimensions (e.g. Family, Organization, Urban/Rural background).

5.2. Methodological implications

This study provides the first operationalization of the multidimensional 'mosaic' framework for culture proposed by Chao and Moon (2005). It thus contributes to understanding how the 'Mosaic' can be applied to cross-cultural research in order to reveal the dynamic nature and various components of individuals' cultural identity. Adopting a two-stage approach, namely surveys combined with follow-up semi-structured interviews allowed for detailed and holistic accounts of the 'relevant' cultural tiles that participants perceived as influential on their cultural identity and behaviour in the workplace. However the relevance of inactive tiles (i.e., Political Affiliation, Religion, etc.) remains to be determined and raises the question of whether individuals can simultaneously relate to and activate *all* of the tiles proposed by Chao and Moon. This study finds that the context in which individuals are operating has a significant effect on the type(s) of 'tile(s)' that are activated and drawn from in order to display behaviour. A tool that enabled us to determine this effect was to have the participants rank the tiles and discuss only the most important ones in a given situation such as their workplace. Future studies can benefit from this approach in order to determine the connectedness between the situational settings and activated cultural tiles, thus enabling individuals to better 'fit' with their social setting (i.e., workplace).

5.3. Managerial implications

That several participants adopted a bespoke 'work identity', which some even perceived as discrepant from their 'cultural identity', implies that employers can aim to identify those individuals who are strongly motivated to adopt the 'organizational culture', or those who are able and willing to 'switch', and by doing so, they can significantly impact employees' behaviour within their domain. Organizations can create a perception of a shared culture among their diverse members through recruitment and selection of suitable members (perhaps even probing candidates' Family values), as well as careful socialization and cultural reinforcement (cf. Hatch, 1993). In so doing, organizations can identify ways in which they encourage the activation of the tiles that promote values which are best aligned with those of the organization (Chao & Moon, 2005). Furthermore, cross-cultural training programmes and team-building workshops aimed at facilitating cooperation and integration among their workforce should accordingly take account of, and direct attention to the multiple cultural determinants of behaviour (i.e. Family, Urban/Rural Background, Organization, Age, etc.), therefore stepping beyond the influence of national cultural values on work behaviour. This can prevent problems that arise from categorizing individuals according to their nationality and consequent prejudicial stereotyping (Coutant, Worchel, Bar-Tal, & van Raalten, 2011; Osland & Bird, 2000).

5.4. Limitations and directions for future research

As the first attempt to empirically investigate a multidimensional operationalization of culture along with its implications, this paper provides a point of departure across theoretical and methodological domains, although the results are based on a relatively small convenience sample. First, while the study revealed the various tiles which make up an individual's cultural mosaic, the extent to which the tiles overlap (Family and Nationality providing similar values), or are in a nested relationship with one another (Religion being a sub-tile of Family) are not yet fully understood.

Second, while the rankings revealed that individuals can assume similar cultural identities by prioritizing a similar set of cultural tiles, the *content* (i.e., the actual values contained within each 'tile',

as those values are understood and internalized by the individuals themselves) are left unspecified. For example, two people ranking Family or Nationality highly may hold very different, even antagonistic value-sets. Future research can therefore deepen and extend our approach by moving beyond a ranking exercise to codify precisely the values individuals associate with each 'tile'.

Moreover, considering that adopting, aligning and managing multiple cultural tiles requires a certain degree of 'code-switching' and cultural adaptation (Ang & Dyne, 2008; Earley & Peterson, 2004; Molinsky, 2007), future research can attend to the effect of cultural intelligence and psychological challenges on individuals' ability, willingness and motivation to adopt or align multiple cultural tiles. Nevertheless, our study contributes to our understanding of *how* and *when* individuals adopt multiple cultural identities and constitutes the first empirical operationalization of the 'mosaic' framework of culture proposed by Chao and Moon (2005).

Acknowledgements

Appendix 1. Mosaic framework definitions

Appendix 2. Consent form and mosaic matrix

My name is … and I am a PhD candidate in Organizational Behaviour at [University]. My research focuses on the development of trust across cultures in multi-national organizations. The research moves one step beyond cultural awareness trainings and focuses on the effect of individual's cultural awareness on their behaviour at the workplace. With an increasing level of diversity within organizations, this research aims to explore people's personal experiences of cross-cultural relationships at work and ways in which they overcome any obstacles that may occur in order to ensure effective working relationships.

In this respect, the *Cross-Cultural Trust Development* survey below has been designed with the aim to measure:

- Your personal, professional and cultural background.
- Your tendency to trust your professional partner (counterpart) from a different cultural background.
- Your cultural awareness and adaptability.

This <u>questionnaire</u> which takes approximately <u>20</u> min to complete will be followed up by a <u>45</u> min <u>interview</u> in order for me to gain a more in depth understanding of your experiences. Your input is highly valued for the completion of my doctorate and the results will be of high value for your organization as it aims to enhance and facilitate cooperation, knowledge sharing, tolerance of uncertainty and communication in your multi-cultural workplace.

Primary category	Tile label and definition
Demographic	Age: Refers to individuals' numeric age which is also associated with their life experiences.
	Ethnicity: Refers to individuals' ethnic background
Geographic	Nationality: Refers to individuals' country of birth or the nationality they have adopted as their national cultural identity.
	Urban/Rural Background: Refers to individuals' climate growing up (whether they lived in an urban or rural area).
	Coastal/Inland Background: Refers to the individuals' climate growing up (whether they lived in a coastal or inland area).
Associative	Family: Refers to individuals' identification with their familial group (i.e. parents, spouse, partner, children, and siblings).
	Religion: Refers to individuals' affiliation or identification with religious beliefs.
	Profession: Refers to individuals' occupation that involves training and formal qualification.
	Organization: Refers to the individuals' employer.

Each of us has a unique 'cultural identity' that has been shaped by our history and experiences, and memberships of different groups. This section aims to look at *your* unique identity and the factors that may impact your cultural identity, work behaviour (the way you behave in the workplace). For each component on the <u>left</u> (i.e. Your Culture, work behaviour), please rank the items on the <u>top right</u> (i.e. Age, family, etc.) according to their degree of impact: (1= lowest impact; 11= highest impact). **(For example: if you feel that your hobbies/interests have little impact on your work behaviour you would rank it as <u>2</u>; if none at all, rank it as <u>1</u> or if you feel that your nationality has a strong impact on your culture you would rank it as <u>10</u>).**

	Family	Age	Ethnicity	Nationality	Religion	Profession	Hobbies/ Interests	Political Affiliation	Organisation/ Workplace	Urban/ Rural background (where you grew up)	Coastal/ Inland[1] background (where you grew up)
1) Your cultural identity											
2) Work behaviour											

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